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THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

September 15, 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Talking Points with British, French  
and German Foreign Ministers

You may wish to use some of the points in the attached  
paper for your talks with the Foreign Ministers of the United  
Kingdom, France and Germany at luncheon today.

DR

I. The necessity for unity and action in the NATO Alliance.

We have no substitute for the NATO Alliance. It is, therefore, essential that the Four Powers bring along with them the other nations of the Alliance at every stage--political, military and economic. We in the United States are making serious changes in our national life to accomplish our military buildup; the same may soon be true of the other three powers. If we are to ask the smaller nations of the NATO Alliance to make these same sacrifices we must be able to assure them of full consultation and cooperation. The best example of such consultation and cooperation is, of course, the unity of the British, French, Germans and Americans. If a corresponding unity in NATO is to be forged, there is going to have to be agreement at all levels, so that if we are to be faced with the most serious decision of all--war--we will have made sure that we have moved to this dreadful decision together. In this regard, it would certainly be reassuring at this time to know that NATO has been able to agree upon such a less vital matter as planning for economic countermeasures against the Soviet Bloc. Unless these plans are agreed to now, we risk attrition of one of the best non-military weapons we have to bring the Soviets to the negotiating table in a reasonable position. We would also want to be sure that NATO propaganda is concerted and concentrated both on themes and targets.

II. The desirability of organization for rapid consultation and decision among the Four Powers.

While the results of the Ambassadorial Group meetings in Washington have been impressive, the incidents of the last few days in and around Berlin have suggested that we must be sure our organization for rapid and satisfactory consultation and decision is geared to the fast-moving pace of events. The Soviet threats to ground and air access to Berlin are mounting and will require immediate and well-thought-out responses from us. To make sure we have these responses ready, it would be helpful if the Ambassadorial Group in Washington could be backed up by more personnel from the chanceries of the Three Powers and by more rapid decisions from the governments of the Ambassadors.

III. Questions

III. Questions of negotiations or negotiating positions vis-à-vis the USSR.

We hope it will be possible for you to avoid discussions of these today. The sensitivity of the French toward the whole subject of negotiations with the USSR, particularly as envisioned for the talks with Foreign Minister Gromyko in New York, was marked in the Tripartite Foreign Ministers meeting yesterday. In addition, the imminence of the German elections has made the danger of leaks to the press more grave than usual. Any discussion of negotiations or negotiating positions with the Germans at this time will almost certainly lead to large and spectacular headlines in German newspapers tomorrow.

If the matter is raised we would hope you would find it possible to give a noncommittal reply.